

Dear Senator Harp,

3/21/11

My name is Melissa Gyba and I am a sophomore in the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience and Technology program in Woodbury. I live in Oxford and I attend this regional agriscience school choice Program because I enjoy agriculture. I work on a farm in the state of New Hampshire but I live and go to school here. My whole family has gone into the Ellis Clark agriscience program and I followed in their foot steps. This program has really changed my life and how I act on a daily basis. I entered the program as very shy freshman and bloomed into a hard working, outgoing student. I enjoy the FFA and all that is included in it. I have met a lot of new people from all over the state.

The Agriscience program has made a big difference in my enthusiasm for the future. I plan to become an agriscience teacher and teach here at the Ellis Clark Agriscience and Technology Program. This program has made things better in my life. My current SAE, or supervised agricultural experience, is at a family vegetable farm. I pick produce and run a farm stand for the locals. I enjoy what I am doing and love vegetables. I am always in the garden and what I learn in the agriscience program can help my family run a more efficient farm and know more about the plants I am producing. This job also enables me to have good people skills that I will later use while teaching. These people skills have allowed me to approach shoppers in a recent event called, Food Check-out Day, which was sponsored by the Litchfield Farm Bureau. We educated the public about Connecticut agriculture and many were surprised that they didn't know about the program. I hope to spread the word to as many people as I can about the Ellis Clark Agriscience Program.

As these 2 years have passed I have done a lot for our FFA Chapter and got involved any way I can. At the moment I am a sophomore block officer which is a junior officer. This involves leadership skills to encourage my peers to get involved any way they can. I have had a chance to educate others at the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Open House we had at the school this October. Now my team and I are preparing for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies in the State Convention. These ceremonies are standard parliamentary procedure that takes place every meeting. Although we may look a little rough around the edges during class, we clean up well for major events and out meetings.

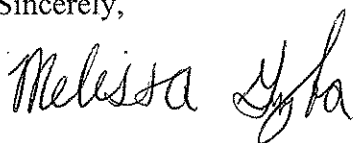
Without the Agriscience Program here at Nonnewaug High School I would still be the shy little girl I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and would not have had the chance to further my education before college. This allowed me to find my calling before reaching college and ended up lost. I have got the chance to get a head start and prepare for my future in agriculture.

I am writing this letter to encourage you to **please urge the Appropriations Committee to pledge 9 million dollars of the school choice funding increases proposed in the Governor's budget to the state's 19 regional (vo-ag) agriscience programs.**

Our agriscience programs have been drastically underfunded for over 20 years as compared to the magnet schools, charter schools, vocational technical schools and the other school choice funding programs. (Please see attached flyer with details)

This will allow hundreds of more students like me to enroll in these successful programs so they will have the same positive experience I am having now.

Sincerely,



Melissa Gyba